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THE ACINTYA-BHEDĀBHEDA SCHOOL

IT is proposed to give here a short account of the views entertained by the Acintya-bhedābheda school of the Vedānta about Brahman, the Jīva, and the universe and the relation between Brahman and the rest. This school, also known as the Bengal school, was founded by Śrī Caitanya. His teachings were systematized and elaborated by his followers, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmin and others.

The views of this school differ widely from those of the Śaṅkara school on account of the difference in their modes of interpretation of the texts of the Upaniṣads. The Bengal school holds[1] that the Śrutis (Upaniṣads) are authorities by themselves and that interpretation in the *mukhyā vṛtti* (i.e. denotative and direct or primary meanings) only may reveal the true spirit of their texts and uphold their self-authoritativeness. The Śaṅkara school, however, bases its conclusions mainly on interpretations in the *lakṣaṇā* or *gauṇī vṛtti*[2] (i.e. indirect or secondary and derivative meanings) which is allowable only when the *mukhyā vṛtti* fails to give any admissible meaning. The meanings in *lakṣaṇā* or *gauṇī* are inferential and hence are not consistent with the self-authoritativeness of the Śrutis.

BRAHMAN OR ŚRĪ KṚṢṆA

According to the Upaniṣads, Praṇava is Brahman ;[3] and according to the *Gītā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is both Praṇava and Parama Brahman.[4] Etymologically, Brahman means 'One who is great' and 'One who can make great'.[5] The second part of the meaning implies existence of *śaktis* (powers or energies) in Brahman ; and there are explicit texts in the Upaniṣads supporting His possession of an infinite number of active *śaktis,* super-

[1] *Caitanya Caritāmṛta (Cai. Ca.)*, I. 7. 124, 125.

[2] *Lakṣaṇā* means a meaning connected with *mukhyārtha* (denotative or etymological meaning). It is to be resorted to only when the *mukhya* meaning is not admissible (*Alaṅkāra-kaustubha*, II. 12). An illustration: 'Devadatta lives in the Gaṅgā'. The denotative meaning of 'Gaṅgā' is a river of that name. It is not possible for a man to live in a river. Thus the *mukhya* meaning of 'Gaṅgā' is not admissible here. Hence it is inferred that Devadatta lives on the bank *connected with* the river Gaṅgā. *Gauṇī* is a variety of *lakṣaṇā* and is thus applicable only when *mukhya* meaning is inadmissible. In it, a *guṇa* (attribute) of the *mukhya* meaning is supposed to be the implication desired (*Sarvasaṁvādinī*, p. 19). An illustration: 'Devadatta is a lion'. The denotative meaning of 'lion' is a beast and is not therefore applicable to Devadatta, a man. Hence it is inferred that Devadatta is as valorous as a lion. Here 'lion' implies its valour, an *attribute* of a lion.

[3] *Pra. U.*, V. 2.

[4] *B. G.*, IX. 17 ; X. 12.

[5] *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, I. 12. 57.

natural (*parā*) and inseparable (*svābhāvikī*) from Him.[6] He possesses both the aspects implied by the meaning of the word Brahman.[7] According to the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa,* He is Parama Brahman, only because He possesses both the aspects.[8] There is none equal or superior to Him.[9] Brahman is thus infinite in every respect—infinite in magnitude, infinite in *śaktis,* i.e. in the number of *śaktis* and also in the magnitude and activities of each *śakti.* He is the Infinite.

Brahman is Sat (absolute existence), Cit (absolute intelligence or consciousness, implying non-materiality), and Ānanda (absolute bliss).[10] Of His *śaktis* three are main, viz. *svarūpa-śakti, māyā-śakti,* and *jīva-śakti.*[11]

(1) His *svarūpa-śakti,* also known as *cit-śakti* on account of its being sentient, eternally exists in Him or His self and is very intimately connected with Him and His *līlās* (divine sports), and is thus called His *antaraṅga-śakti* (internal and intimate power). It has three aspects, viz. *sandhinī, saṁvit,* and *hlādinī,* corresponding respectively to His Sat, Cit, and Ānanda.[12] By *sandhinī,* He upholds His own existence and that of others ; by *saṁvit,* He knows and makes others know ; and by *hlādinī,* He enjoys and makes others enjoy bliss. These three cannot, however, be completely separated from one another ; but their proportion may differ in different cases. A combination of these three is technically called *śuddha-sattva* (pure existence) which is sometimes named after the *śakti* that preponderates in it. With the preponderance of *sandhinī,* it is called *ādhāra-śakti* (receptive power) ; with the preponderance of *saṁvit,* it is called *ātmavidyā* (knowledge about Brahman) ; and with the preponderance of *hlādinī,* it is called *guhyavidyā* (*bhakti* or loving devotion).[13] *Śuddha-sattva* is so called on account of its being untouched by Māyā, implying that it is quite different from the *sattva* of Māyā.

(2) *Māyā-śakti* is that aspect of His power which is insentient and material (*jaḍa*) as opposed to *cit-śakti,*[14] and it cannot therefore move without His or His *svarūpa-śakti's* agency. It is also known as *bahiraṅga-śakti* (external power), as it cannot be in direct touch with Him. It has two aspects—*guṇa-māyā* and *jīva-māyā* ; the former consists of the three *guṇas—sattva, rajas,* and *tamas,* and, at the time of creation, is transformed into the constituents of the material universe ; and the latter helps the

[6] *Śvetāśvatara U.,* VI. 8.
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] *Viṣṇu Purāṇa,* I. 12. 57.
[9] *Śvetāśvatara U.,* VI. 8.
[10] *Cai. Ca.,* I. 4. 54 ; II. 20. 132 ; *Bhakti-sandarbha,* 51.
[11] *Cai. Ca.,* II. 8. 116.
[12] *Cai. Ca.,* II. 8. 118, 119.
[13] *Bhagavat-sandarbha,* 118.
[14] *Cai. Ca.,* I. 5. 51.

creation by making the Jīva forget its self and cling to the enjoyment of material pleasures.

(3) All beings, human or otherwise, are in essence His *jīva-śakti,* which is also known as *taṭastha-śakti* (marginal or intermediate power), as it is included in neither *māyā-śakti* nor *svarūpa-śakti.*[15]

Of the three main *śaktis* of Brahmaṇ, *svarūpa-śakti* is superior to the two others in every respect and is hence also called *parā-śakti. Jīva-śakti* also is superior to *māyā-śakti,* as the one is sentient and the other insentient.[16]

As the *śaktis* of Brahman are inseparably and eternally associated with Him, He cannot but be eternally qualified (*saviśeṣa* and *saguṇa*). He has endless, supernatural attributes (*guṇas*), all derived from His *svarūpa-śakti,* but none from His *māyā-śakti.* The texts that describe Him as *nirguṇa* (attributeless) imply that He possesses no *guṇa* from *Māyā.*[17] Thus He is both *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa* ; and it is for this reason that in the different Upaniṣads and even in the same Upaniṣad, He is described as both.[18] He is omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient and is beyond the influence of time, space, and relativity.

He is Satya (the real), Śiva (the good), and Sundara (the beautiful). Brahman, being *ānanda* (bliss), which is essentially sweet and captivating, is the embodiment of sweetness and beauty and relishableness and is thus attractiveness itself. It is for this reason that He is called Kṛṣṇa, the supreme Attractor. Though both the words, 'Brahman' and 'Kṛṣṇa', have essentially the same implications and denote exactly the same ultimate Reality, yet the latter seems to carry with it much more vividly the idea of supreme attractiveness. Brahman appears at His best, so to say, in Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is thus the most fascinating and hence the most appealing aspect of Brahman,[19] embodying in Him all the features of Brahman—His *śaktis,* attributes, etc.—in the most highly developed forms. It is for this reason that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is called the highest Brahman or Parama Brahman.[20]

Śrī Kṛṣṇa has a form, or strictly speaking, His self is a form,[21] resembling that of a human being,[22] or rather a human form is a poor resemblance of His. Though apparently limited like an ordinary human body, it is really infinite and all-pervading.[23] This form is bliss and

[15] *Paramātma-sandarbha,* 39 ; *Cai. Ca.,* I. 2. 86.
[16] *B. G.,* VII. 5.
[17] *Viṣṇu Purāṇa,* I. 12. 69.
[18] *Gopālatāpanī U.,* II. 97.
[19] *Cai. Ca.,* II. 8. 110.
[20] *Gopālatāpanī U.,* II. 44 ; *B. G.,* IX. 17.
[21] *B. S.,* III. 2. 14 (*Govinda-bhāṣya*).
[22] *Gopālatāpanī U.,* 11 ; *Viṣṇu Purāṇa,* IV. 11. 2 ; *Bhā.,* III. 2. 12.
[23] *Gopālatāpanī U.,* II. 97 ; *Cai. Ca.,* I. 5. 11 ; I. 5. 15.

consciousness solidified,[24] as it were, and is perfect, eternal, non-material, perpetually in the prime of youth, and enchantingly beautiful.[25]

Brahman or Śrī Kṛṣṇa performs His *līlās* (blissful sports or pastimes)[26] with His eternal *parikaras* (playmates or associates) in His own *dhāman* (abode) known as Goloka, Vṛndāvana, or Vraja, which is a particular expression of His *ādhāra-śakti*. He is self-complacent (*ātmārāma*) and self-sufficient (*svarāj*); but His self-complacency or self-sufficiency does not suffer on account of His pastimes with His associates, as they, being His own manifestations or manifestations of His *śaktis*, are not different from Him. They serve Him with intense love in His *līlās*, which therefore are rendered exceedingly charming both to Him and to His associates. They are ever eager to make Him happy with enjoyment of bliss, and He too in His turn is similarly eager for their happiness.

According to the Upaniṣads, Brahman or Śrī Kṛṣṇa is Rasa,[27] which denotes that He is astonishingly relishable and at the same time the best relisher (Rasika) too, the transcendental Rasika. Through the eternal activities of His *svarūpa-śakti*, He is the embodiment of infinite varieties of rasahood, which find their eternal expressions in His infinite manifestations, known as His different *svarūpas* (selves), such as Nārāyaṇa, Rāma, Nṛsiṁha, Sadāśiva, and others, who, apparently having separate existence, actually exist in, and owe their existence and status to, Him. It is He who in His one and the same *vigraha* (self) appears as so many.[28] He is one in many and many in one.[29] In Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is also known as Parama Īśvara, Pūrṇa Bhagavat, or Svayam Bhagavat, His *svarūpa-śakti* and rasahood find the fullest, the highest, and the most perfect expression. The *svarūpa* (manifestation) in which *svarūpa-śakti* and rasahood find only the minimum expression, so as not to give it any noticeable qualifiedness, is known as Nirviśeṣa (unqualified) Brahman, generally, Brahman as referred to in the scriptures.[30] As *svarūpa-śakti* is inseparable from Brahman, it exists in His *nirviśeṣa* manifestation also; but beyond giving this manifestation its own characteristic or feature such as all-pervading existence, it remains in a perpetual state of inaction. However, of the intermediate manifestations, the one nearest to Nirviśeṣa Brahman is known as Paramātman, the *antaryāmin* or immanent aspect of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in whom *svarūpa-śakti* and rasahood find an expression higher than in

[24] *Brahma Saṁhitā*, V. 1; *Bhaktirasāmṛta-sindhu*, II. 1. 15.
[25] *Cai. Ca.*, II. 21. 83-122; *Bṛhadbhāgavatāmṛtam*, II. 5. 112.
[26] *B. S.*, II. 1. 33.
[27] *Tai. U.*, II. 7.
[28] *Cai. Ca.*, II. 9. 141.
[29] *Bhā.*, X. 40. 7; *Gopālatāpanī U.*, I. 21; *Ka. U.*, II. 3. 12.
[30] *B. G.*, XIV. 27; *Mu. U.*, III. 1. 3.

Nirviśeṣa Brahman so as to give this aspect a form.[31] It is from this aspect as locus (*āśraya*) and ground (*udgama-sthāna*) that the different *avatāras* or divine appearances and the phenomenal world of spirit and nature proceed. The other innumerable aspects lying between Paramātman and Śrī Kṛṣṇa possess higher expressions of *svarūpa-śakti* and rasahood in them in different degrees. They are all Īśvaras or Bhagavats, Śrī Kṛṣṇa being the Īśvara of Īśvaras. They all possess eternal forms of bliss and consciousness solidified, as it were, all-pervading though apparently limited.[32] All these *bhagavat-svarūpas* have their respective associates with whom they perform their *līlās* and thus relish their own sweetness in their respective *dhāmans* (abodes) which are only so many expressions of Vṛndāvana and hence of His *ādhāra-śakti*. The innumerable manifestations, being less perfect in respect of their *śaktis* and rasahood, are called *svāṁśas* (subjective portions) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It is now evident that Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the ultimate Reality, appears in three aspects, viz. Brahman, Paramātman, and Bhagavat, as referred to in the *Bhāgavata*.[33]

As already hinted at, the rasahood of Śrī Kṛṣṇa has two main aspects— relishable *rasa* (denoting astonishingly enjoyable bliss) and relishing *rasa* or Rasika. The relishing *rasa* is Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, the supreme Rasika. The bliss He enjoys has again two aspects— *svarūpānanda* (bliss of enjoying His own self) and *śaktyānanda* (bliss of enjoying His *śakti*), which constitute the two aspects of the relishable *rasa*. He being *ānanda* and nothing but *ānanda* is immensely delightful, and He enjoys Himself with the help of His *hlādinī-śakti* or rather *svarūpa-śakti* in which *hlādinī* preponderates. This *hlādinī*, being a *śakti* appertaining to His *ānanda*, is essentially delightful, but becomes much more richly relishable when thrown by Him into the heart of His devotees, *parikaras*, and others. There it is transformed into *bhakti* and *preman* or intense love for Him which finds expression in a flow, as it were, from the heart of His *parikaras* in course of their loving services in His *līlās*, and is enjoyed by Him with maddening relish. This is *śaktyānanda*; it is much more enthralling and covetable than His *svarūpānanda*. *Preman* is delightful to His devotees too,[34] who with the help of *preman* relish His all-round sweetness, which is so charming and attractive as to madden, with intense and anxious longing for relish, everybody including His different *svarūpas* and even Himself.[35] It seems indeed, Śrī Kṛṣṇa relishes *rasa* as His own self (*svayaṁ-rūpa*), as different *bhagavat-svarūpas*, and also as His *parikaras*, and it appears, He

[31] *Ka. U.*, VI. 17.
[32] *Laghubhāgavatāmṛtam*, I. 3. 86-90.
[33] *Bhā.*, I. 2. 11 ; *Cai. Ca.*, I. 2. 6, 7.
[34] *Prīti-sandarbha*, 64.
[35] *Cai. Ca.*, II. 21. 86-88 ; *Bhā.*, III. 2. 12.

manifested Himself eternally as all these, only to enjoy the *rasa* in all its varieties.

Of the *bhagavat-svarūpas,* other than Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Nārāyaṇa is the chief whose *dhāman* is known as *paravyoman* or *mahāvaikuṇṭha,* including in it the *dhāmans* of all the *svarūpas.* In *paravyoman,* where Śrī Kṛṣṇa appears as Nārāyaṇa, His *aiśvarya* (awe-inspiring grandeur and mightiness) preponderates over His *mādhurya* (sweetness) and stifles the *sevā-vāsanā* (desire for loving service) of the associates, who cannot therefore offer whole-hearted service. In Dvārakā and Mathurā, two *dhāmans* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, both *mādhurya* and *aiśvarya* are equally evolved; but the former is sometimes overtaken by the latter when the associates, being inspired with awe, have their *sevā-vāsanā* stifled. But in Vṛndāvana, although both *mādhurya* and *aiśvarya* find their fullest and most perfect expression, yet the former overwhelmingly predominates over the latter, so much so that even the consciousness of His Godhead, being immersed, as it were, in the bottomless ocean of sweetness, is lost to Him as well as to His associates. Here His *aiśvarya,* being steeped in sweetness, loses its awe-inspiring function, and disguised, as it were, in *mādhurya,* helps the enjoyment of bliss.

The love of the Vṛndāvana associates (*vraja-bhāva*) is intense enough to inspire in them a sense of 'mine'-ness (a feeling of 'He is mine', *mamatva-buddhi*) as distinguished from a sense of 'thine'-ness (a feeling of 'I am Thine') in the *paravyoman* associates.

According to the degree of intensity, the love (*preman* or *bhāva*) of the Vṛndāvana associates has been classified as *dāsya, sakhya, vātsalya,* and *kāntā. Dāsya preman* is the love of the *dāsas* (servants) of Kṛṣṇa whom they regard as their loving and beloved master. But it suffers from a sense of inferiority on the part of the *dāsa,* whose *sevā-vāsanā* (desire for service) cannot therefore find an adequate expression. *Sakhya preman,* or the love of His *sakhis* (comrades), is immune from such a complex and is thus superior to *dāsya.* The *sakhis* regard Him as their equal in every respect and treat Him as such without the slightest hesitation, He too reciprocating their love exactly in a similar manner. *Vātsalya preman* is the love of parents for their beloved child. Though Śrī Kṛṣṇa, being the ultimate Reality, cannot have any parents, two of His associates, Nanda and Yaśodā, cherish a firm belief (*abhimāna*) that Kṛṣṇa is their own child, and Kṛṣṇa also entertains a corresponding belief. Thus with a loving sense of superiority, they regard Him as the object of their anxious parental care and kindness and sometimes even go so far as to chastise and punish Him[36]

[36] *Cai. Ca.,* I. 4. 21.

when they think it necessary for His welfare, but which the *sakhis* will not think of doing, as the love of the *sakhis,* though intense, is not so intense as to inspire in them a sense of 'mine'-ness regarding Kṛṣṇa, so crystallized as in the case of parents. In *kāntā preman,* the love is much more intensified and the sense of 'mine'-ness much more crystallized. It bears a resemblance to the mad love of a damsel for her amorous comrade or paramour, with the distinction that in *kāntā preman* there is not even a shadow of any desire for one's own pleasure. The cause of this distinction is that people under the bondage of Māyā are guided by Māyā and not by *svarūpa-śakti,* and this Māyā leads their mind to their own selves (i.e. away from Kṛṣṇa) and generates in them desires for their own pleasure; while the *līlā* associates of Kṛṣṇa are guided by *svarūpa-śakti* and not by Māyā which, being *bahiraṅga-śakti,* cannot even approach them; and this *svarūpa-śakti,* whose only function is to serve Kṛṣṇa for His happiness in all possible ways, leads their mind to Kṛṣṇa, but never away from Him, and generates in them desires for His happiness only. It is for this reason that the *Bhāgavata* says (X.22.26) that as fried or boiled paddy does not germinate, so does not the mind engrossed in Kṛṣṇa generate *kāma,* i.e. desire for one's own pleasure. However, the associates of Kṛṣṇa possessing *kāntā preman,* known as *gopīs,* are really the embodied expressions (*mūrta rūpa*) of His *svarūpa-śakti hlādinī* and are thus His own consorts (*svakīyā kāntās*); but in order that an extremely fascinating feature of the *kāntā rasa* (which, on account of its surpassing sweetness, is also known as *madhura*-[sweet] *rasa*) may be evolved, and also with a view to showing that *kāntā preman* is regardless of any hindrance that may confront the manifestation of their *sevā-vāsanā,* their relationship with Kṛṣṇa in His manifest *līlā* is, by the influence of *yoga-māyā,* conceived like that of a damsel with her paramour (*parakīyā*).[37] The distinction between the supersensible love of the *gopīs,* technically called *mahābhāva,* and that of the other associates of Vṛndāvana, is that the love of the *dāsas, sakhis,* or *vatsalas* (parents) is subject to their particular relationship with Kṛṣṇa and cannot therefore find an expression transgressing that relationship; while the relationship of the *gopīs* is subject to their love, which may therefore find an unrestricted expression in any direction and to any extent so as to make them forget everything concerning their own selves.[38] Such love of the *gopīs* again has various phases manifested in different *gopīs*; but all the phases, with infinitely superior manifestations unapproachable by any other, exist in their chief known as Śrī Rādhā, who is *pūrṇa-śakti* and is not therefore essentially different from Kṛṣṇa, the *pūrṇa-śaktimat* (the most perfect possessor of *śaktis*), though the

[37] *Cai. Ca.,* I. 4. 26; *Gopālatāpanī U.,* II. 23; *Śrīkṛṣṇa-sandarbha,* 177.
[38] *Bhaktirasāmṛta-sindhu,* I. 153-160.

two exist separately from eternity for enjoyment of the bliss of *līlās*.[39] Just as the other *bhagavat-svarūpas* are the manifestations of Kṛṣṇa, so are their *kāntās* (consorts) the corresponding manifestations of Śrī Rādhā,[40] who is thus the *mūlākāntā-śakti* (the main source of all the *kāntā śaktis* or the consorts of all the *bhagavat-svarūpas* as well as of the *gopīs*). However, all other *gopīs* minister to the enjoyment of His *līlās* with Śrī Rādhā by their most loving services.

The enjoyment of *rasa* may attain its fullest perfection only when it is relished not only as an object, but also as a subject of love. In Vṛndāvana, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the transcendental Rasika, is the object of His associates' love and in certain cases, subject too ; but as regards *kāntā preman,* He is only the object of Śrī Rādhā's love and not at all a subject. And it is one's love that enables one not only to serve Him, but also to relish His overwhelming sweetness which is alluring even to Himself ; and the extent of enjoyment corresponds to the extent to which one's love is developed. It is Śrī Rādhā alone therefore who may relish His sweetness to the fullest extent possible, as it is in her alone that love finds its most perfect expression. In Vṛndāvana therefore Śrī Kṛṣṇa's fervent desire for relishing His own sweetness like Śrī Rādhā remains ever unfulfilled. It is, however, fulfilled in another expression as Śrī Caitanya or Śrī Gaurāṅga performing *līlās* in His eternal abode Navadvīpa, sometimes manifested in the phenomenal world like Vṛndāvana. According to the Bengal school, Śrī Caitanya is the embodiment of Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa,[41] of *pūrṇa-śakti* and *pūrṇa-śaktimat,* of Rasarāja (Kṛṣṇa, the highest expression of *rasa*) and *mahābhāva* (the highest expression of *kāntā preman*)—the object and the subject combined, in one and the same form, the subjective aspect preponderating. The associates of Śrī Caitanya in Navadvīpa are no other than His Vṛndāvana associates in appropriate forms and names. Thus the *līlās* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Caitanya are only two parts, as it were, of the same *līlā* current of the ultimate Reality, *rasa* of the Upaniṣads.

JIVA OR JĪVĀTMAN

According to the Bengal school, Jīvātman (individual soul) is a *śakti* (*jīva-śakti*) of Brahman, superior to *māyā-śakti* and is *cit* (consciousness) by nature.[42] It is called an *aṁśa* (part) of Brahman[43] on account of its being His *śakti,*[44] as a *śakti* forms a part of the *śaktimat* (possessor of *śaktis*). On

[39] *Cai. Ca.,* I. 4. 83-85.
[40] *Cai. Ca.,* I. 4. 63-68.
[41] *Cai. Ca.,* II. 8. 233, 238.
[42] *B. G.,* VII. 5 (and commentaries thereof by Śrīdhara Svāmin and Viśvanātha Cakravartin) ; *Viṣṇu Purāṇa,* VI. 7. 61.
[43] *B. G.,* XV. 7 ; *B. S.,* II. 3. 43-47.
[44] *Paramātma-sandarbha,* 31.

the authority of a verse in the *Bhāgavata*[45] in support of the transfusion of *tattvas* (elements) into one another, Jīva Gosvāmin holds that Jīvātman is an *aṁśa* of Kṛṣṇa, transfused with *jīva-śakti*, but not associated with *svarūpa-śakti*.[46] It is not separated from Him by Māyā, as Māyā being His *bahiraṅga-śakti* cannot touch Him, nor is it a part separated from Him, like a chip cut off from a block of stone, as He is not divisible.[47] Jīvātman does not possess *svarūpa-śakti*[48] and hence is called His *vibhinnāṁśa* (differentiated part)[49] as distinguished from His *svāṁśa* possessing *svarūpa-śakti*.

Jīvātman, being *cit* by nature, is a knower (*jñātṛ*)[50] and a doer (*kartṛ*),[51] though its power of doing is derived from Brahman.[52]

As to the magnitude of Jīvātman, it is the smallest thing imaginable.[53] Its magnitude is like that of an atom.[54] Residing in the heart of a living being[55] it spreads its consciousness throughout the whole body, just as a spot of sandal-paste placed somewhere on the body spreads its coolness beyond the spot,[56] or just as a flower spreads its fragrance beyond its own self.[57]

Jīvātman has a separate entity which is eternal.[58] The soul of a being in bondage does not therefore lose its existence and become one with Brahman when it attains liberation, as the Śaṅkara school holds. That the separate existence of the soul continues even after its liberation is evident from a text of the Upaniṣad[59] purporting that the Jīva realizing *rasa* becomes *ānandin* (blissful possessor of *ānanda* or bliss) and from a passage in Śaṅkara's *bhāṣya* on the *Nṛsiṁhatāpanī*[60] as well as from a *sūtra* of the *Brahma-Sūtra*,[61] implying that even the *muktas* (liberated souls) serve God or Brahman. Jīvātmans are infinite in number.[62]

Since Jīvātman is a *śakti* and an *aṁśa* of Brahman, the Bengal school holds that it is its intrinsic nature and duty to serve Him,[63] as a *śakti* is always found to serve its possessor, and a part the whole, like the roots and branches

[45] *Bhā.*, XI. 22. 7 ; *Paramātma-sandarbha*, 41.
[46] *Paramātma-sandarbha*, 31.
[47] *B. S.*, II. 3. 43 (*Govinda-bhāṣya*).
[48] *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, I. 12. 69.
[49] *Paramātma-sandarbha*, 45.
[50] *B. S.*, II. 3. 18.
[51] *B. S.*, II. 3. 33.
[52] *B. S.*, II. 3. 41.
[53] *Bhā.*, XI. 16. 11 ; *Paramātma-sandarbha*, 17, 33 ; *Mu. U.*, III. 1. 9.
[54] *Mu. U.*, III. 1. 9 ; *Ka. U.*, II. 8, 13 ; *B. S.*, II. 3. 19-22.
[55] *Chā. U.*, VIII. 3. 3 ; *Pra. U.*, III. 6.
[56] *B. S.*, II. 3. 23.
[57] *B. S.*, II. 3. 26.
[58] *B. S.*, II. 2. 36 ; *B. G.*, XV. 7.
[59] *Tai. U.*, II. 7.
[60] *Nṛsiṁhatāpanī U.*, II. 15, 16, as quoted in *Cai. Ca.*, II. 24. 33.
[61] *B. S.*, IV. 1. 12 (*Govinda-bhāṣya*).
[62] *Paramātma-sandarbha*, 44 ; *Bhā.*, X. 87. 30.
[63] *Cai. Ca.*, II. 20. 101.

of a tree serving the tree. The Jīva is an eternal servant of Brahman, a loving servant, of course. Brahman or Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the object of the Jīva's loving service (being the most lovely and lovable, the most enchantingly beautiful and graceful, and the most loving one) is always eager to give bliss to His associates ; and the Jīvas, as His associates, are ever as eager to minister to His pleasures by loving services in His *līlās*. The Jīva's loving service is a constant source of ever-increasing joy (*sevānanda*) to both the subject and the object of love.

There are two classes of souls,[64] *nitya-mukta* (eternally liberated) and *baddha* (under the bondage of Māyā from eternity). The former serve Him as His eternal associates enjoying the bliss of loving services ; and the latter, because they forget Kṛṣṇa and their relationship with Him, have come under the bondage of Māyā, but may be liberated and become His associates by proper devotion.

The Jīva, being intrinsically His loving servant, cannot, unless prevailed upon by some extraneous circumstances such as a strong desire for merging into Brahman, be really satisfied with mere liberation from Māyā, as it is not in full consonance with his servanthood. Nor may Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Rasika, if He be ever good and merciful which He certainly is, be fully satisfied with giving to the Jīva anything short of admittance to His blissful *līlās*.

However, there are mainly two classes of His associates—those who are the expression of His *svarūpa-śakti*, as already referred to, and those who are liberated Jīvas. The latter, being essentially His servants, may serve Him only under the guidance of the former.

But how to get rid of Māyā and realize one's essential servanthood and have one's *sevā-vāsanā* evolved?

As non-remembrance of Brahman is the cause of the soul's bondage, the bondage may be removed only by removing non-remembrance, which may be done only by remembering Him, by knowing Him, and ultimately, by realizing Him, just as darkness may be removed only by bringing in light. Hence, remembrance of Brahman is the essence of all forms of *sādhanā* (means to be adopted for liberation).[65] But simple remembrance, unaided by His *svarūpa-śakti*, cannot lead one to realization, as He can be realized only in His *svarūpa-śakti*, or rather, in that aspect of His *svarūpa-śakti* which is known as His *ādhāra-śakti*, technically, Vāsudeva.[66] Hence the Bengal school holds that the only effective means of liberation and realization of Brahman is *bhakti*,[67] which at the stage of practice is graced

[64] *Cai. Ca.*, II. 22. 8-11.
[65] *Bhaktirasāmṛta-sindhu*, I. 2. 5.
[66] *Bhā.*, IV. 3. 23.
[67] *Bhā.*, XI. 14. 21 ; *B. G.*, XVIII. 55.

by *svarūpa-śakti* and is ultimately ripened into *preman,* a particular aspect of *svarūpa-śakti* in which *hlādinī* and *saṁvit* preponderate.[68] It is for this reason that this school holds that even *jñāna* and *yoga,* unaided by *bhakti,* cannot produce their desired effect,[69] while *bhakti* is efficacious independently of *jñāna* and *yoga. Māṭhara Śruti* says: 'It is only *bhakti* that leads the Jīva to Brahman, it is only *bhakti* that shows Brahman to the Jīva. Puruṣa or Brahman is subject to *bhakti.* Only *bhakti* is great'.[70] In the practice of *jñāna* associated with *bhakti, svarūpa-śakti* appears as *ātmavidyā* (knowledge of Self), and in the practice of pure *bhakti,* as *guhyavidyā* (mystic experience).

Broadly speaking, there are four ways (*mārgas*) that aspirants after salvation follow—*karma, yoga, jñāna,* and *bhakti.* These are all, more or less, technical terms. *Karma* signifies performance of *yajñas* and other Vedic rites, generally known as *varṇāśrama-dharma* (directions to be followed by persons placed in different *varṇas* or castes, at different *āśramas* or stages of life as enjoined by scriptures). *Karma* may lead one to prosperity and happiness in this world or to *svarga* (heaven in the perishable universe) after death, and even to *satyaloka,* but not to liberation from Māyā.[71] With the dedication to Kṛṣṇa of all fruits of *karma,* it may, however, pave one's path to liberation.[72] *Yoga* signifies meditation aimed at union with Paramātman. *Jñāna* (knowledge) signifies meditation with a view to *sāyujya-mukti* or merging into Nirviśeṣa Brahman. And *bhakti* signifies devotional practices, such as worship of God, chanting His names, attributes, etc., singing songs about His sweetness and beauty and *līlās,* and so on. This is known as *sādhana-bhakti* (*bhakti* at the stage of practice). When mixed with *karma, yoga,* or *jñāna,* it is called *miśrā* (mixed) *bhakti* and gives efficacy to the way associated with it. It is called *kevalā* or *śuddhā* (unalloyed) *bhakti* when it aims exclusively at the loving service of Kṛṣṇa, as the dearest and nearest one, for His happiness only, and not at anything else, not even at liberation from Māyā. This constitutes, as it were, the fifth *puruṣārtha,* going beyond *mokṣa* or liberation which is the fourth objective of the Jīva. But even with the practice of *śuddhā bhakti,* if one ultimately has a sense of His *aiśvarya* (awe-inspiring grandeur and mightiness) predominating in one's mind, one would attain in *mahāvaikuṇṭha,* the *dhāman* of Nārāyaṇa, any of the four kinds of *mukti* (liberation), viz. *sārūpya* (same appearance as that of Nārāyaṇa), *sāmīpya* (vicinity of Nārāyaṇa), *sālokya* (residence at

[68] *Bhaktirasāmṛta-sindhu.* I. 3. 1.
[69] *Cai. Ca.,* II. 22. 14 ; *Bhā.,* I. 5. 12 ; II. 4. 17 ; X. 14. 4.
[70] *'Bhaktireva enaṁ nayati, bhaktireva enaṁ darśayati, bhaktivaśaḥ puruṣaḥ, bhaktireva garīyasī' (Māṭhara Śruti),* quoted in *Prīti-sandarbha,* 64, 65 and many other places by Jīva Gosvāmin and also in *Govinda-bhāṣya.*
[71] *B. G.,* II. 37 ; IX. 20, 21 ; *Mu. U.,* I. 2. 7.
[72] *B. G.,* IX. 27, 28.

the same abode with Nārāyaṇa), and *sārṣṭi* (*aiśvarya* similar to that of Nārāyaṇa). A *śuddha bhakta* (devotee) wants neither *sāyujya* nor any of these four kinds of *mukti,* though the Bengal school recognizes them. He aims exclusively at the loving service of the transcendental Rasika, the attainment of which is known as *prāpti* (attainment of the ultimate Reality as the dearest and nearest one), and liberation from Māyā is only incidental to it.

A devotee of the Bengal school worships both Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Caitanya with their associates in the *līlā* he chooses to serve them in. He also meditates on their *līlās,* imagining that he himself, under the guidance of the *līlā* associates, is serving them there as an associate in each *līlā* with appropriate form (*rūpa*). Besides worship (*arcanā*) and meditation (*smaraṇa*), he may practise other items of *sādhana-bhakti,* the most important and the most efficacious item being the chanting of His names which are all *cit* and *ānanda,* and hence, not different from Him.

When by the practice of *sādhana-bhakti,* the heart of a devotee is purified, it is graced with the advent of a special aspect of *svarūpa-śakti* emanating from Śrī Kṛṣṇa,[73] which with the continuance of *sādhanā* develops into *sādhya-bhakti* (*bhakti* desired or aimed at) and *preman* (intense love for Kṛṣṇa) that leads him to his goal, which, according to the Bengal school, is the loving service of the transcendental Rasika in His *līlās* in Vṛndāvana as well as in Navadvīpa, under the guidance of any of the four classes of associates already mentioned, viz. associates with *dāsya, sakhya, vātsalya,* and *kāntā bhāvas.* On the success of *sādhanā,* when graced by *svarūpa-śakti,* he will be favoured with a form of *śuddha-sattva* befitting his desired service, in each of the two *dhāmans*—Vṛndāvana and Navadvīpa.

THE UNIVERSE: CREATION

According to the Upaniṣads, Brahman is the universe and exists beyond it too.[74] It may mean that He is the cause of this universe or that He transforms Himself into the universe. The Bengal school holds that Brahman is the material and also the efficient cause of the universe and that He transforms Himself into the universe, Himself remaining unaffected by the transformation.[75]

Brahman creates the universe with the help of His *māyā-śakti. Māyā-śakti,* being inert, has no moving power of its own and remains in a state

[73] *Cai. Ca.,* II. 22. 57 ; *Bhaktirasāmṛta-sindhu,* I. 2. 2 ; *Prīti-sandarbha,* 64.
[74] *Mā. U.,* 1.
[75] *B. S.,* I. 4. 26. The example of a spider and its threads in the Upaniṣads supports the transformation theory. *Cai. Ca.,* I. 7. 117, 118.

of equilibrium before the creation begins. When He desires creation, He looks at Māyā and thereby transmits His sentient creative (moving) power to it, whereby the state of its equilibrium is disturbed and creation ensues.

It has already been noted that Māyā has two aspects—*guṇa-māyā* and *jīva-māyā*. The *guṇa-māyā*, with the help of the power transmitted by Brahman, transforms itself into the constituents of the infinite varieties of things in the universe and thus becomes the 'constituent' cause of the universe. And *jīva-māyā*, with the aid of the power transmitted, helps the creation by making the souls-in-bondage forget their selves and their relationship with Brahman and also by inspiring in them an attachment for things mundane ; and thus it becomes the efficient cause of the universe. But it should be noted that Brahman is the principal cause and Māyā only the secondary cause of the universe, as neither *guṇa-māyā* nor *jīva-māyā* can help the creation unless and until Brahman's power is transmitted to them. However, it is now evident that according to the Bengal school, the *māyā-śakti* of Brahman, associated with the energy transmitted by Him, and not His self with *svarūpa-śakti*, is transformed into the universe, He in His self remaining unaffected.[76]

It has already been pointed out that this school admits the transfusion of *śakti* and *śaktimat* into each other,[77] and there are texts in the scriptures to show that Brahman spreads Himself in the universe like threads in a piece of cloth.[78] It therefore follows that the universe is the *pariṇāma* (transformation) of Brahman transfused with *māyā-śakti* (not with His *svarūpa-śakti*) but still remaining untouched by Māyā through His *īśvaratva* (inscrutable powers).[79] Here a question may arise, Since *svarūpa-śakti* exists eternally and inseparably in Brahman, how is it that the universe is the *pariṇāma* of Brahman transfused with *māyā-śakti* only, and similarly that the Jīva is an *aṁśa* of Brahman transfused with *jīva-śakti* only? How is it that *svarūpa-śakti* plays no part? The answer probably is that in the case of the Jīva and the universe, *svarūpa-śakti* no doubt exists in Brahman, but it exists in a state of perpetual inaction as in the case of Nirviśeṣa Brahman ; and it is for this reason that the *Brahma Saṁhitā* asserts that the universe evolves out of Nirviśeṣa Brahman regarded as a halo (*prabhā*) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.[80]

Besides Māyā, Jīva, *kāla* (time), and *karma* (destiny, the works done by Jīva in the previous births), all these being *śaktis* of Brahman, also play important parts in creation. It has already been pointed out how the Jīva,

[76] *Paramātma-sandarbha*, 73.
[77] *Ibid.*, 34.
[78] *Bhā.*, X. 15. 35 ; X. 46. 31 ; *B. G.*, X. 42.
[79] *Bhā.*, I. 11. 39.
[80] *Brahma Saṁhitā*, V. 40.

under the influence of *jīva-māyā,* finds its way into the universe and thus becomes an important factor of creation. *Kāla* helps the transformation of Māyā, just as it helps milk to be changed into curd. And *karma* or destiny determines the nature of the Jīva's material body and its organs and also the origin and nature of the things that the Jīva may, according to its destiny, enjoy or suffer.

However, as opposed to the Vivartavāda (theory of apparent transformation) of the Śaṅkara school, according to which the universe has only an illusory existence, the Bengal school holds that its existence is real though transitory. This theory of creation is known as Pariṇāmavāda (theory of real transformation).[81]

ACINTYA-BHEDĀBHEDA EXPLAINED

There is a good deal of difference of opinion among the philosophers regarding the relation between the Jīva and Brahman. In one view, there is no difference (*bheda*) whatsoever; in another view, there is; and yet in a third view, there are both difference (*bheda*) and non-difference (*abheda*). In fact, the Upaniṣads contain texts in support of *bheda* and also of *abheda* between the Jīva and Brahman, and even in the same Upaniṣad may be found texts in support of both,[82] which fact is therefore suggestive of a reconciliation between the two sets of texts, based on equal importance attached to them, which they unquestionably deserve, as they equally convey the truths revealed in the Upaniṣads. Such a reconciliation has always been the aim of the Bengal school.

The Bengal school upholds a peculiar type of Bhedābhedavāda known as Acintya-bhedābhedavāda, which stands on a much wider basis than that of other schools, whose arguments are mainly as follows: (1) The Jīva and Brahman are *abhinna* (non-different) inasmuch as they are *cit* (consciousness), and they are *bhinna* (different) inasmuch as their attributes are quite different. Brahman is *vibhu cit* (all-pervading consciousness), while the Jīva is *aṇu cit* or '*cit*-atom' (the smallest imaginable portion of consciousness); the one is all-knowing, the other is too-little-knowing; the one is all-powerful, the other has very little power and that too emanating from Brahman; the one is the master of Māyā, and the other is susceptible to, and is under, the bondage of Māyā; the one is the Creator of the universe, the other, while under the bondage of Māyā, has his body created by Him; and so on. (2) As the Jīva is an *aṁśa* of Brahman, the relation between them must be one of simultaneous *bheda* and *abheda,* for such is the relation between *aṁśa* and *aṁśin.* The Bengal school accepts these views,

[81] *Cai. Ca.,* II. 6. 154, 157.
[82] *Chā. U.,* III. 14. 1; VI. 8. 7; *Br. U.,* I. 4. 10; II. 1. 20.

but only as a corollary to its wider view regarding the relation between *śakti* and *śaktimat* in general.

It has already been said that the Jīva is an *aṁśa* of Brahman transfused with His *jīva-śakti* and that the universe also is Brahman transfused with His *māyā-śakti*. And the *dhāmans* of Brahman and His different *svarūpas* as well as their *parikaras* or associates also have been said to be essentially the different aspects of His *svarūpa-śakti* or, strictly speaking, Brahman transfused with the different aspects of *svarūpa-śakti*, as the latter cannot be separated from the former. Hence, since it is the different *śaktis* or their different aspects, and not Brahman, that give them their distinctive characteristics, it may be said that the Jīva, the universe, the *dhāmans*, and the *parikaras* are all essentially His *śaktis*, and their relation with Brahman will be the relation that exists between *śakti* and *śaktimat* in general.

But how is *śakti* related to *śaktimat*? Are they absolutely different from each other or are they absolutely non-different? Can they be separated?

The last question may be taken up first. According to the Upaniṣads, the *śaktis* of Brahman are *svābhāvikī*, inseparably connected with Brahman, as has already been pointed out. Such a relation between *śakti* and *śaktimat* is universal. It has been very aptly illustrated in the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* with the help of the examples of musk and fire. As odour cannot be separated from musk, as heat cannot be separated from fire, so *śakti* cannot be separated from *śaktimat*. Indeed, inseparability seems to be the essence of *śaktitva* (state of being *śakti*). Red-hot iron emits heat, but it does so only so long as it is hot. Heat is not natural to iron, and hence heat is not said to be its property or *śakti*, as in the case of fire.

Then the other question about difference or non-difference. The answer is not an easy one. One cannot think of musk bereft of its odour; and, accordingly, one may be inclined to think that there is no difference between the two. But when one feels the odour of musk at a distance from the latter, one is again inclined to think that there is a difference between the two. Again, if the substance of musk and its odour be supposed to be different, both are to be regarded as constituents of musk; and consequently, the musk will lose in weight on emission of its odour, which, however, one's experience does not corroborate. Hence, the substance of musk cannot be said to be different from its odour.

The relation between Brahman and His *śaktis* also may be considered in the light of the above example. Brahman being *ānanda* is inseparably connected with His *śaktis*. *Ānanda* and *śaktis* of Brahman constitute one and the same thing.[83] If these two be supposed to be

[83] *B. S.*, II. 3. 43 (*Govinda-bhāṣya*).

different, like oxygen and hydrogen in water, *svagata-bheda* (internal difference) in Brahman becomes unavoidable, which, however, cannot be admitted. Nor can it be supposed that there is absolute non-difference between the two, as His attributes, such as grace, may be felt even when His self is not realized.

The relation is indeed a peculiar one; and it is probably for this reason that the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* regards the *śaktis* (properties or qualities) of things as *acintya-jñānagocara* (falling within the range of inexplicable knowledge).[84] *Acintya-jñāna* means the knowledge that cannot be accounted for. Sugar is sweet; but why? Quinine is bitter and cures malaria; but why? Poison kills a man, whereas milk does not; but why? One cannot answer these whys. Still these are truths and have got to be admitted. Such knowledge of truths that cannot be accounted for and yet have to be admitted is known as *acintya-jñāna* or inexplicable knowledge.

However, it has been found that the recognition of mere difference between *śakti* and *śaktimat,* apart from non-difference, gives rise to insurmountable difficulties, and the recognition of mere non-difference too, apart from difference, gives rise to similar difficulties. Nor may the existence of either be ignored. Hence it cannot but be admitted that the relation is one of simultaneous difference and non-difference, and such a simultaneity is inexplicable (*acintya*). After elaborate discussion in his *Sandarbhas* and *Sarvasaṁvādinī,* Jīva Gosvāmin holds that the relation is one of *acintya-bhedābheda* (inexplicable difference and non-difference). By *acintya* he means 'incapable of being considered under either of the categories of absolute difference and absolute non-difference' (*Bhinnābhinnatvādi-vikalpaiścintayitum-aśakyaḥ*), as in the case of fire and its heat.[85] This is known as the Acintya-bhedābhedavāda (theory of inexplicable difference and non-difference) of the Bengal school.

ADVAITA TATTVA

According to the Upaniṣads, Brahman is *advaya tattva, ekamevādvitīya* (one without a second), which, according to the philosophers of different schools, implies that He is without any of the three kinds of *bhedas* (difference), viz. *sajātīya-bheda* (*bheda* within the same species), *vijātīya-bheda* (*bheda* between alien species), and *svagata-bheda* (*bheda* within self or internal difference).

Both Śaṅkarācārya and Jīva Gosvāmin agree that Brahman is without these three kinds of *bhedas,* but the ways of their thinking are different.

In spite of there being explicit texts in the Upaniṣads regarding the

[84] *Viṣṇu Purāṇa,* I. 3. 2.
[85] *Krama-sandarbha* of *Bhāgavata,* XI. 3. 37.

eternal existence of inseparable *śaktis* of Brahman, Śaṅkarācārya does not recognize them, probably because he thinks that since *śaktis* give rise to differences or *bhedas,* Brahman, who is without any *bheda,* cannot possess them. In his opinion, the texts that speak of Brahman's *bhedas* or *śaktis* have no *pāramārthika* value (the value that may lead one to eternal truth) and possess only *vyāvahārika* value (the value that may help one in one's *sādhanā* and that, too, only during the period of *sādhanā* or *upāsanā*). In consequence of such a view he asserts that (1) the Jīva has no real existence as such and is nothing but Brahman under the influence of Māyā or nescience and will become one with Brahman on the removal of nescience ; (2) the universe has only an illusory existence and appears to be real only under the influence of Māyā ; (3) the *bhagavat-svarūpas* also are only Brahman under the influence of an aspect of Māyā ; and (4) only Brahman and nothing else has real existence. Thus Brahman is one without a second. In his attempts to establish his views, Śaṅkarācārya had generally to resort to *lakṣaṇā* or *gauṇa* meaning of the texts even where *mukhyā vṛtti* was admissible.

On the other hand, Jīva Gosvāmin recognizes the existence of Brahman's *śaktis,* as is quite evident from the previous discussions, and also the real existence of the Jīva as such, of the *bhagavat-svarūpas* and their *dhāmans* as such, and also of the universe, though as transitory. He holds that all the texts of the Upaniṣads have *pāramārthika* value, and none need be ignored as *vyāvahārika.* He resorts generally to the *mukhya* meaning of the texts. Herein lies the fundamental difference between Śaṅkara and Jīva Gosvāmin.

According to Jīva Gosvāmin, since the Upaniṣads speak of *bhedas,* they have got to be recognized ; but these *bhedas* are only apparent, not real ; otherwise, the Upaniṣads would not have spoken of Brahman as being one without a second in spite of these *bhedas.*

Then what is meant by *bheda*? According to Jīva Gosvāmin, *bheda* can be predicated of two things only when each of them is *svayaṁsiddha* (i.e. self-evolved, self-dependent, self-sufficient, and independent of everything else) ; and Brahman has no such *bhedas—sajātīya, vijātīya,* or *svagata*—as these are not *svayaṁsiddhas* unlike Himself.

As to *sajātīya-bheda,* both Brahman and the Jīva are *cit* in essence, and hence they belong to the same species, *cit,* and thus the Jīva appears to be a case of *sajātīya-bheda* in relation to Brahman ; but it is not really so, for the Jīva, owing its existence and status to Brahman, is not *svayaṁsiddha.*

As to *vijātīya-bheda,* the material universe, being in essence unconscious matter, belongs to a species alien to Brahman, the absolute consciousness, and thus may appear to be an instance of *vijātīya-bheda* ; but it is

not really so, as it is not *svayaṁsiddha,* depending as it does on Brahman for its existence and status.

As to *svagata-bheda,* it is of two varieties, viz. of different ingredients and of different phases. In the material bodies of beings, there are five elements—*kṣiti* (earth), *ap* (water), *tejas* (light), *marut* (air), and *vyoman* (voidness)—all being different types of matter; and there is also the conscious soul. Hence there are *svagata-bhedas* in individual beings. But in Brahman there is nothing but *cit* or *ānanda,* nor is there any soul apart from His self. Hence there is no *svagata-bheda* in Him. Again, the different *bhagavat-svarūpas* existing in Him, being the different phases of His rasahood, do not constitute *svagata-bheda,* as they are not *svayaṁsiddha* or independent of Him. The attributes of Brahman also are not a case of *svagata-bheda,* as they too owe their existence to Him, or rather to His *svarūpa-śakti.*

In this connection, Jīva Gosvāmin considers in his *Sarvasaṁvādinī* a text of the Upaniṣad—*'Vijñānamānandaṁ Brahma'.* Here, if *vijñāna* (consciousness) and *ānanda* (bliss) denote the same thing, there will be redundance, which is inadmissible in the same text. If they denote different things, they will appear like *svagata-bhedas.* But they are not actually so for reasons stated above, just as a piece of ornament of pure gold, with nothing else intermixed with it, is not a *svagata-bheda* of pure gold, it being not independent of gold and there being nothing but gold in it. The *dhāmans* and *parikaras* of Brahman, owing their existence to Him or His *svarūpa-śakti,* are not also *bhedas.* Thus Brahman is *advaya* (one without a second) in spite of the *bhedas,* which are only apparent and not real.

The Bengal school bases its arguments and conclusions strictly on the *mukhyārtha* of the Śrutis, attaches equal importance to all the texts, and ignores none as *vyāvahārika,* and tries to reconcile the different texts, the most striking feature being its Acintya-bhedābhedavāda and establishment of Brahman's *advayatva* in spite of His inseparable *śaktis.* The most outstanding feature of the Bengal school, apart from its philosophical aspects, is its Rasa-cult that brings into the limelight the most fascinating and the most attractive phase of the rasahood of Brahman, hitherto more or less undisclosed (being only hinted at in the scriptures), and points out ways and means for its realization, which surpasses even the charm of *Brahmānanda* (bliss of realizing Nirviśeṣa Brahman). This latter implies calm and quiet bliss as distinguished from the ever-effulgent, ever-overflowing, and ever-rising flood of *rasa* in all its phases as in the *līlās* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.